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Viewing cable 10CAIRO197, Egypt: New Round of MB Arrests

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags [#cablegate](#) and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. [#10CAIRO197](#).

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
10CAIRO197	2010-02-11 16:09	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy Cairo

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/9135>
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RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 000197

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/02/11
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PHUM](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: Egypt: New Round of MB Arrests

11. Key Points:

-- (U) Three senior leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Egypt including Deputy Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat, Spokesman Essam El Eryan and MB "Mufti" Abdel Rahman El Barr were detained by security forces the the MB.

-- (C) According to media reports the group is being held "under investigation" for an initial period of 15-days. MB sources tell us that the group was originally detained, and their homes searched, under the Emergency Law but that their detention will likely be justified under an "investigative file" that will opened to their lawyers next week.

-- (C) There are no formal charges against those detained. Media reports indicate that accusations under investigation include membership in a "banned" organization that threatens the "peace and security of the state" and spreading the "extremist ideas" of Sayed Qutb. The detainees are reportedly not cooperating with investigators.

-- (C) The arrests come in the lead-up to the 2010 parliamentary elections and during the MB's own internal elections for its 100-man Shura Council, its legislative body. They also follow recent internal MB elections for a new Guidance Bureau and a new Supreme Guide.

12. (S/NF) Comment: Members of the MB's Guidance Bureau have been arrested several times in recent years. However, the detention of these leading figures, including the newly elected Deputy Supreme Guide, seems to represent an escalation. Most observers here see the move as part of a continuing GOE campaign to suppress the NDP's only significant political challenge ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections. However, there is some danger that the move could backfire on the government, presenting an already weakened MB in a sympathetic light, and highlighting GOE insecurity ahead of elections.

13. (S/NF) Comment Continued: It is unclear how the GOE will handle this case. There is precedent for both the transfer of MB defendants to a military court and jail time in a military prison (as in the 2008 case against Deputy Supreme Guide Khariat El Shatter), and the release of defendants on bail after several months in detention while the investigation against them remains on the books (as in the November 2009 release of Guidance Bureau member Abdel Moneim Al Fotouh). End Comment.

New High Profile MB Arrests

14. (C) Three high-ranking members of the MB's Guidance Bureau (the group's 16-member administrative body) were detained by State Security forces with twelve other lower ranking members on the morning of February 8. The group includes newly-named Deputy Supreme Guide Mahmoud Ezzat, MB spokesman (one of three recently-named spokesmen for the group) Essam El Eryan, and MB "Mufti" (or religious leader) Abdel Rahman El Barr. A fourth member of the Guidance Bureau, Mohie Hamed, avoided arrest. According to Ikhwanweb, the MB's English-language website, Hamed has been ordered to appear before the Supreme State Security Prosecutor. One of the twelve other MB detainees arrested along with them has reportedly been transferred to a hospital for heart

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surgery following a heart attack during his arrest. MB sources have reported to the media that those detained have declined to give any statements to investigators. These latest high-profile arrests come amid continued reports of arrests of dozens of rank and file MB members outside of Cairo reportedly as they gather in preparation for elections of the MB's 100-man Shura Council (the group's legislative body) scheduled for April 2010.

Charges

15. (C) No formal charges have been announced by the Public Prosecutor. MB Parliamentary Bloc leader and Spokesman Saad Katatni told PolOff on February 10 that the group was originally detained, and their homes searched, under the Emergency Law (Ref A), but said he expected any "investigation" or "prosecution" would be conducted according to the criminal code. Katatni said lawyers for the detained have been told they will be given access by the Prosecutor to the "investigative file" against the group next Tuesday February 16. According to media reports the group remains in detention "under investigation" for the next 15 days (this can be renewed several times for a period of up to six months by the Prosecutor himself). Charges under investigation include belonging to a "banned" organization that threatens the "peace and security of the state," a charge commonly made against detained members of the MB. For the first time members of the group have been charged with participation in a faction of the MB that adheres to the "takfiri" or "un-Islamic" doctrine of Sayed Qutb, which deems those who do not follow it "infidels" and thus, according to the Public Prosecutor, supports the formation of a military wing that would

carry out armed resistance against the regime. (Note: Qutb was executed by former President Nasser in 1966 for having led an attempt to violently overthrow the regime. Both current Supreme Guide Mohammed Badie and now arrested Deputy Guide Ezzat were detained in 1965 along with Qutb. They were later released by President Anwar Sadat. End Note.)

¶6. (C) There is a precedent for long detentions of MB leaders while "under investigation." Three other high-ranking members of the MB's Guidance Bureau, including Dr. Abdel Meneim Al Fotouh, were detained for several months in 2009 while "under investigation." (Ref B) While all three have been released on bail, the cases against them are still pending (Ref C). (Note: Fotouh was released in November 2009 and subsequently lost his seat on the MB's Guidance Bureau in December elections (Ref D). End Note).

MB Response

¶7. (C) Reports of the arrests first surfaced the morning of February 8 on the MB's English-language website Ikhwanweb. The following day (February 9) Ikhwanweb published an MB statement condemning the arrests. In the statement the group said it believed the arrests were linked to MB support for "the resistance of the besieged people of Gaza" and are intended to "undermine participation by the group ahead of the legislative elections later this year." The MB also affirmed that despite the arrests it will continue on its "missionary course" and the "path (it has) chosen for attaining the country's welfare" through "peaceful reformist methods despite...restrictions placed to liberties." MB members were reportedly present in large numbers outside the offices of the Public Prosecutor on Tuesday February 9. The group also staged a small protest in Suez against the ongoing detention of other MB members despite the end of their court-ordered detention period.

MB Arrests as a Pre-emptive Political Strike
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¶8. (C) MB lawyer Abdel Menem Abdel Maqsoud told the independent daily El Shorouk that he believed the GOE targeted MB "organizational leaders" like former MB Secretary General and now Deputy Guide Mahmoud Ezzat to hamper preparations for the Shura Council elections in June 2010 and the People's Assembly elections in November 2010. He added that the level of the arrests sent the message that no one was immune. Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies analyst Amr El Choubaki called the arrests a "pre-emptive strike to foil" MB election preparations.

Prospects for MB Participation in a National Coalition

¶9. (C) According to political commentator, University Professor, and head of the "Coalition Against Succession" Hassan Nafaa, the arrests also were part of an effort to stop any potential coordination between the MB and other opposition political groups in the lead-up to the elections. Before the arrests, Democratic Front Party XXXXXXXXXX confirmed to PolOff press reports that he and others were working with various political movements, including the MB, to form a unified national coalition under the banner of a "Conference for All Egyptians." XXXXXXXXXX was surprised the intended conference had surfaced in the media after he ar SCOBAY